

AN
ACCOUNT
OF A LATE
EPIDEMICAL DISTEMPER,

Extracted from a LETTER

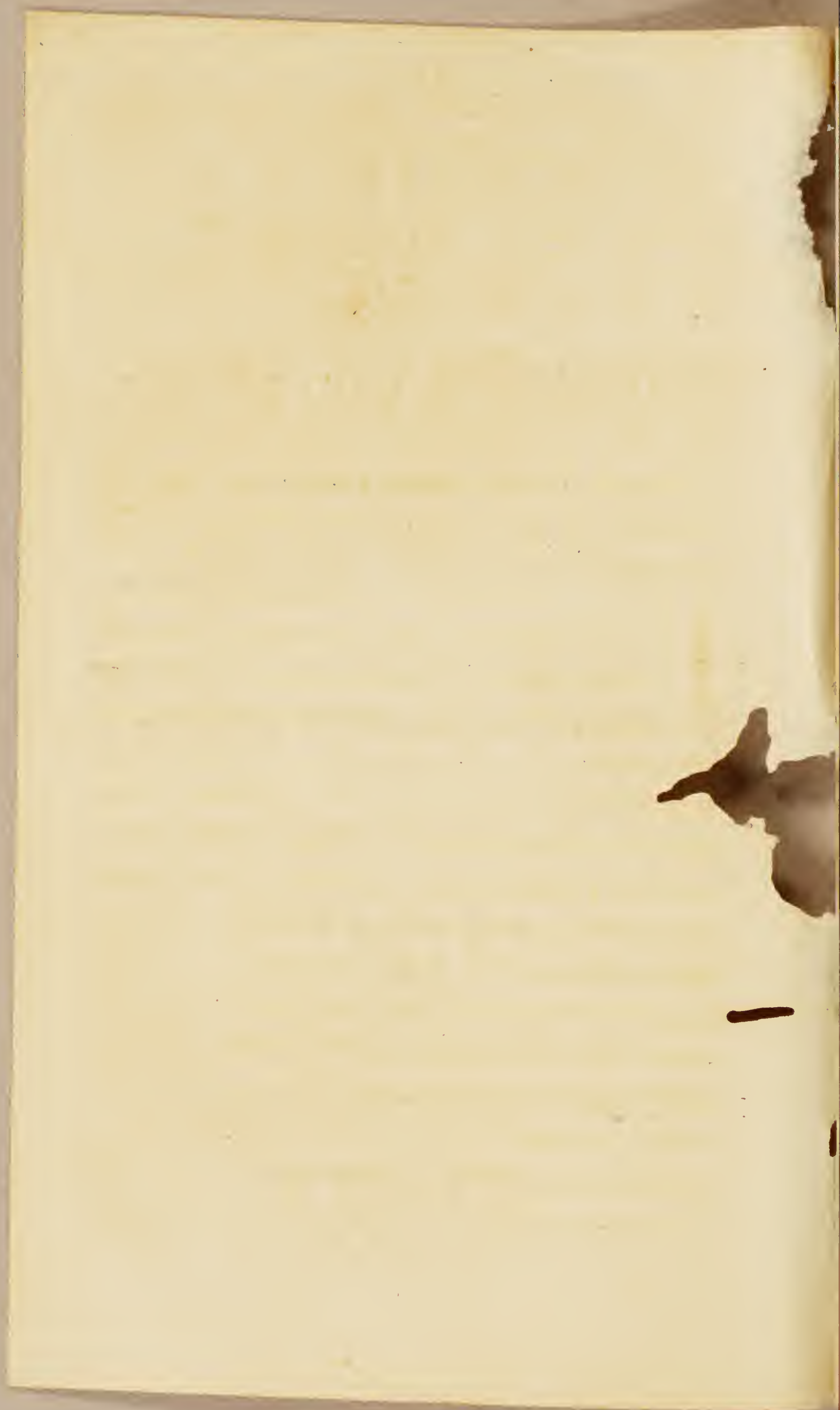
Addressed to GEDNEY CLARKE, Esq;

By WILLIAM SANDIFORD, M. D.
of BARBADOS.



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A C C O U N T
O F A L A T E
E P I D E M I C A L D I S T E M P E R,

*Extracted from a Letter addressed to Gedney
Clarke, Esq; by William Sandiford, M. D.
of Barbados.*

IN the Months of *May, June, and July* last,
I was called to many Patients, white as
well as black, young as well as old, and of
both Sexes, all of whom laboured under a Dis-
ease, which, from the Nature of the Complaints,
as well as the Method of Cure, may be deno-
minated a putrid remitting Fever. The Symp-
toms were various in various Patients: In some
Cases, they were so mild, that for the first two
or three Days, the Patients complained of little
more than alternate Heats and Chills, together
with a general Lassitude of the whole Body; in
others, and more generally, the Patient was at-
tacked all at once in a most violent Manner,
the Head, and of that principally the Fore-part,

being greatly affected. One so seized, ran about like a Person distracted; another fell down suddenly like one struck dead; and even in those, in whom the Symptoms did not run high enough to produce this Effect, so liable was the Head to become affected, that I scarcely remember one Patient in whom this was not a principal, as well as a never-failing Complaint; so that this, with the Stupor and Delirium that generally attended it, and which were always worst at Night, I looked upon to be the chief Diagnostics of the Disease. To which I may add a certain disagreeable Noise in the Head and Ears, often ending in Deafness, great Giddiness, and Imperfection of Sight, so as to incapacitate the Patient from standing or walking without Danger of falling, or even seeing the Light without Offence; great Pain in the Back, an uneasy Sensation about the Pit of the Stomach, with Reachings, and a Disposition to vomit; great Load and Oppression about the *Præcordia*, together with a difficult, laborious Respiration; uncertain Flushings in the Cheeks and Forehead, whilst the Tip of the Nose has been often felt as cold as Ice; and all this attended with intense Thirst and a parching Heat all over the Body:

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After these a profuse Sweat generally broke out, which brought on a Remission of all the Symptoms, but left the Patient so cold, weak, and dispirited, as to make the strongest Cordials necessary to support and keep him up; the Feet to the Knees, and the Hands to the Elbows, being often as cold as Marble; nay, so weakening and exhausting were these Sweats, that I remember some Persons of the strongest and most robust Constitutions, who were reduced in a small Space of Time, to the State of Children, being unable to stand or walk, or even to sit, without Support. The Eyes had generally a fiery red Appearance, somewhat mixed with yellow, which Colour became more discernible as the Disease advanced, till at Length it diffused itself over the whole Face and Surface of the Skin: At other Times, chiefly about the Approach of the Fit, which, by their Appearance, I could often forebode, they looked dull, waterish, and heavy, and exhibited that Appearance which is peculiar to Persons under Intoxication, or whose Brain is greatly affected.

The Pulse, in the State of Remission, was generally small, weak, and quick; as the Time of Attack approached, it grew fuller, stronger, and quicker,

quicker, till at the Access of the Fever itself, it was as strong, full, and quick, as in the higher inflammatory Fever; which induced some who saw the Disease in this Stage, and were unacquainted with its Nature, to order bleeding: But though there were the strongest Reasons imaginable, from all Appearance of Symptoms, to authorise this Procedure; yet such was the peculiar Nature of this Disease, that neither bleeding, purging, nor indeed any other Evacuation, *as such*, was of Use, unless under the Circumstances and Restrictions hereafter to be mentioned: Nay, I have seen a second bleeding sink a strong robust Man, that he was obliged to drink several Pints of old Madeira Wine, before he could be restored to any Degree of Strength and Spirits; and this too under Circumstances of high Delirium, and where any Person unacquainted with the Nature of the Disease, would have thought it unpardonable to have omitted bleeding. The like also has been observed of purging; and accordingly, though Blood drawn has often exhibited Signs of the highest Inflammation, and therefore would appear to warrant both Evacuation and Attenuation; yet so injurious were such Measures found

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in this Disease, that even one or two Doses of Nitre have been known to produce a Purging, and a small Dose of Rhubarb has brought about such a Diarrhœa, as could afterwards scarcely be restrained, weakening and reducing the Patient to a surprising Degree ; a Circumstance, I found by Experience, ever to be avoided, the Disease generally doing this sufficiently of itself ; so that, however necessary, or even to be admitted once, bleeding was to relieve any pressing Symptom, or avert any future ill Consequence that might be apprehended from its Omission, yet it was scarce ever to be repeated ; and though purging might be necessary to keep the Bowels duly soluble, in order to carry off any offending Matter, yet it was as cautiously to be pursued as bleeding, both manifestly conspiring against one of the principal Indications of Cure, the Support of the *Vis Vitæ*.

The Tongue, in the Beginning of the Disease, was of a crimson Hue, which, as the Disease advanced, inclined to a dusky yellow ; sometimes it had on its Surface a thin, white, soft Fur, and was moist, often trembling, as the Patient endeavoured to put it out ; at other Times, chiefly in the State of Remission, it was rough
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and dry, the Patient complaining of the like disagreeable Sensation in his Mouth: But the Appearance which most characterised this Disease, and which indeed was chiefly diagnostic of it, was a smooth, dry, glossy Appearance along its whole Middle, whilst the Sides resembled those of Persons subject to the sore Mouth.

The Urine at first was crude, pale, and thin; as the Disease advanced it became thicker and more saturated, resembling Whey, which at Length turned to a Flame Colour, observable in the Urine of such as have used much Exercise, and taken long Journies, and let drop a thick, whitish brown Sediment; at other Times, chiefly when the Disease has been of some standing, and the Patient apparently much reduced, the Urine has put on quite a bilious Colour, tinging white Linen or Paper dipped into it with a bilious yellow Hue.

With Respect to the Matter thrown up by vomiting, it was for the most Part green and porraceous: In Fact, I have seen it so green as to communicate the like Colour to Water when mixed with it, and kept for Inspection. This, however, of all Evacuations, ought not to be dispensed with; the Patient being generally relieved

lieved of the Load and Oppression about the *Præcordia* in Proportion to this Evacuation; and where it has been omitted, Nature has shewn its Expediency by continually solliciting the Stomach, until a Cholera supervening, has taught the Physician, by its happy Effects, what ought to have been his Conduct.

I must not omit to mention the Stools of Persons affected with this Disease: In some they exactly resembled the Fat of Crabs; in others they were briny and sharp, and in others they were like dirty Water; but though they varied thus in different Patients, yet in all they were very foetid and offensive, and the Patients seldom or never failed to complain of a hard tense Belly.

As to the Blood, though it was often fizy, yet it was easy, even under that Circumstance, to discover its Tendency to Putrescence: For the Part beneath the fizy Surface readily yielded to the slightest Attempt to divide it, and appeared interspersed with livid Spots, separating at the same Time a bilious yellow Serum.

I have now, Sir, given you a pretty full Description of the Disease, upon which you may depend; if, however, different Circumstances of Climate and Situation should produce any Va-

riety in it, not here taken Notice of, you will please to remember, that my Plan was, only to relate what I had seen and experienced myself, without entering any further into the Subject. It remains only therefore, to acquaint you with the Method of Cure I found the most successful, observing Vacuations in general, especially those by bleeding, not successful; on the contrary, that, by weakening and reducing the Patient, they seemed rather to conspire with the Disease. You may be certain I was as sparing as possible in drawing this vital Fluid: Some Portion, however, it was sometimes necessary to draw; but then it was when the Disease was recent, the Patient young, strong, and plethoric, the Inflammation high, and where the Omission of this Evacuation might have been attended with some immediate bad Consequence. Under such Circumstances, bleeding, in a Proportion suitable to the Nature of the Disease, tended to mitigate the succeeding Fit, and in all Probability, to bring the Disease sooner to a plain Remission: With the same View a very gentle Purge, as before described, was of Use; besides, when these Means had been used, the Physician could, with greater Propriety, administer the warm, cordial, alexi-

alexipharmac and antiseptic Medicines, which now became highly necessary to check the growing putrescent State of the Juices.

But though Blood might and ought to be drawn under the Circumstances just mentioned; yet, when the contrary was the Case, or the Operation had been once performed, the Use of the Lancet was to be withheld, even though the Blood should appear highly fizy; for it was found by Experience, that the septic Disposition of the Humours, was but too apt to produce Attenuation and even Dissolution.

This done, an Emetic was always found of Use, the Patient generally throwing up great Quantities of a thick, bilious, jelly-like Substance, to the great Relief of the Load and Oppression about the *Præcordia*, at the same Time, that it had the further good Effect of producing a Stool or two; and indeed Nature seemed, in a particular Manner, to point out this Evacuation, as the Patient, for the most Part, complained of a bitterish Taste, with a Sense of something copperish and disagreeable in his Mouth, of which he was generally relieved by this Evacuation; so that I found it necessary, in the Course of the

Disease, to repeat it as often as such Symptoms appeared.

Having now cleansed the first Passages, the next Indication to be fulfilled, appeared to be that of checking and correcting the putrescent State of the Juices, and of co-operating with Nature in eliminating the morbid Matter through the proper Excretories; for which Purpose, the warm, cordial, alexipharmac and antiseptic Medicines seemed principally necessary; but though these had all the good Effects that could be expected from them, in keeping up the *Vis Vitæ*, correcting the Humours, and assisting Nature in the Expulsion of the morbid Matter; yet all these proved insufficient of themselves to effect a Cure, until the Use of the Bark was introduced, the Patient often dissolving away under the violent, profuse, cold Sweats, until this Medicine put an effectual Check to them; nay, so singular was the Efficacy of this Medicine in this Disease, that I can truly say, I know of none that were cured without it, and all those who neglected to take it, however conformable they might have been in other Respects, were nevertheless often precipitated into the Danger
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of a Dropsy or Consumption: Of such indispensable Use was the Bark in this Disease!

In my first Use of this Medicine, I blended it with the Alexipharmacs in the Form of a Decoction; but as all the good Effects resulting from the Mixture, seemed principally owing to the Bark contained in it, I thought it was but just to give it its due Preference; and accordingly afterwards administered it alone, either in Decoction or Substance, as it seemed necessary.

It is proper to remark particularly, that whereas most Writers forbid the Use of the Bark absolutely, unless in the State of Remission and Intermission, I found it necessary to give it at any Time of the Disease indiscriminately, and Success justified the Practice, the Patient otherwise dissolving away irretrievably under the cold, colliquative Sweats, he had perpetually upon him.

With Respect to Blisters, though I found them necessary to rouse, and give a Spring to Nature, as well as to relieve any topical Pain; yet the Discharge they made was so great and weakening, that I often wished to be able to effect the Purposes intended by them, without putting Nature to so great an Expence; besides, from the Sharpness of the Humours, the blistered Parts
often

often ulcerated so severely, that it was difficult to heal them up even after the Patient was apparently well; so that though I was at Times indispensably obliged to use them, yet it was always with Reluctance.

I cannot dismiss the Subject without enforcing the Use of old Madeira Wine in this Disease; a Medicine of so singular Efficacy, whether considered as a Cordial or an Alexipharmac, as to be scarcely inferior to any the Shop affords. I had one Patient who took no other Medicine throughout the whole Course of the Distemper, until the Remission made it necessary to administer the Bark, to put off the periodic Returns of the Fever; of this, therefore, the Patient may and ought to drink freely throughout this Disease, in the Form of Sangree, acidulated with Elixir of Vitriol.

This Liquor, with Panada, Hartshorn, and Calves Feet Jellies, Sago, rich Broths with aromatic Herbs, and Things of the like soft and nourishing Qualities, are the most proper Diet in this Disease. But however the Method of Treatment may conquer the Disease, a Change of Air, and a Course of Exercise suited to the Strength
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of the Patient, are essentially necessary towards the perfect Re-establishment of his Health.

I have now, Sir, performed the Task you were pleased to assign me. If some Things should be too lightly touched, or others too minutely dwelt upon, however I may have failed in the Execution, you will be assured, my Intention was, to manifest my Readiness to oblige you, and to answer, as far as in my Power, the benevolent Purposes of your Request. I shall fully supply any of my own Deficiencies by referring you to the judicious Sir *John Pringle*, who has treated the Subject fully and accurately, and entered pretty minutely into its *Ætiology*; in all which there is a perfect Agreement with what has obtained here.

It may, however, not be unworthy Notice, that for these two Years last past, it has been remarkably warm and moist in this Island: That great Quantities of Rain have fallen: That the Days have been very hot and sultry, whilst the Nights have been so damp and chill, as to strike Persons with great Coldnesses and Shiverings who have been exposed to them: That most of those who have been attacked with this Fever, were such as lived in the lowest and moist Situations;
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in Places thick beset with Trees, and furrounded with Water, and where the Springs lay nearest to the Surface: That Fishermen, and such as were most exposed to the Cold and Moistness; as also, those of the weakest and most lax Constitutions, were particularly Objects of it. In all the Epidemics, as they have of late severally obtained here, there was ever to be observed something of a putrefactive Tendency.

I have only to add my Wishes, that those who shall pursue the Method here recommended, for the Cure of this Disease, may find it as successful as I have: A Success which I must in a great Measure attribute to the Assistance I received from reading Sir *John Pringle*, and some Hints I was favoured with by my Friend Dr. *Kyd*.

I am, &c.

WILLIAM SANDIFORD.

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